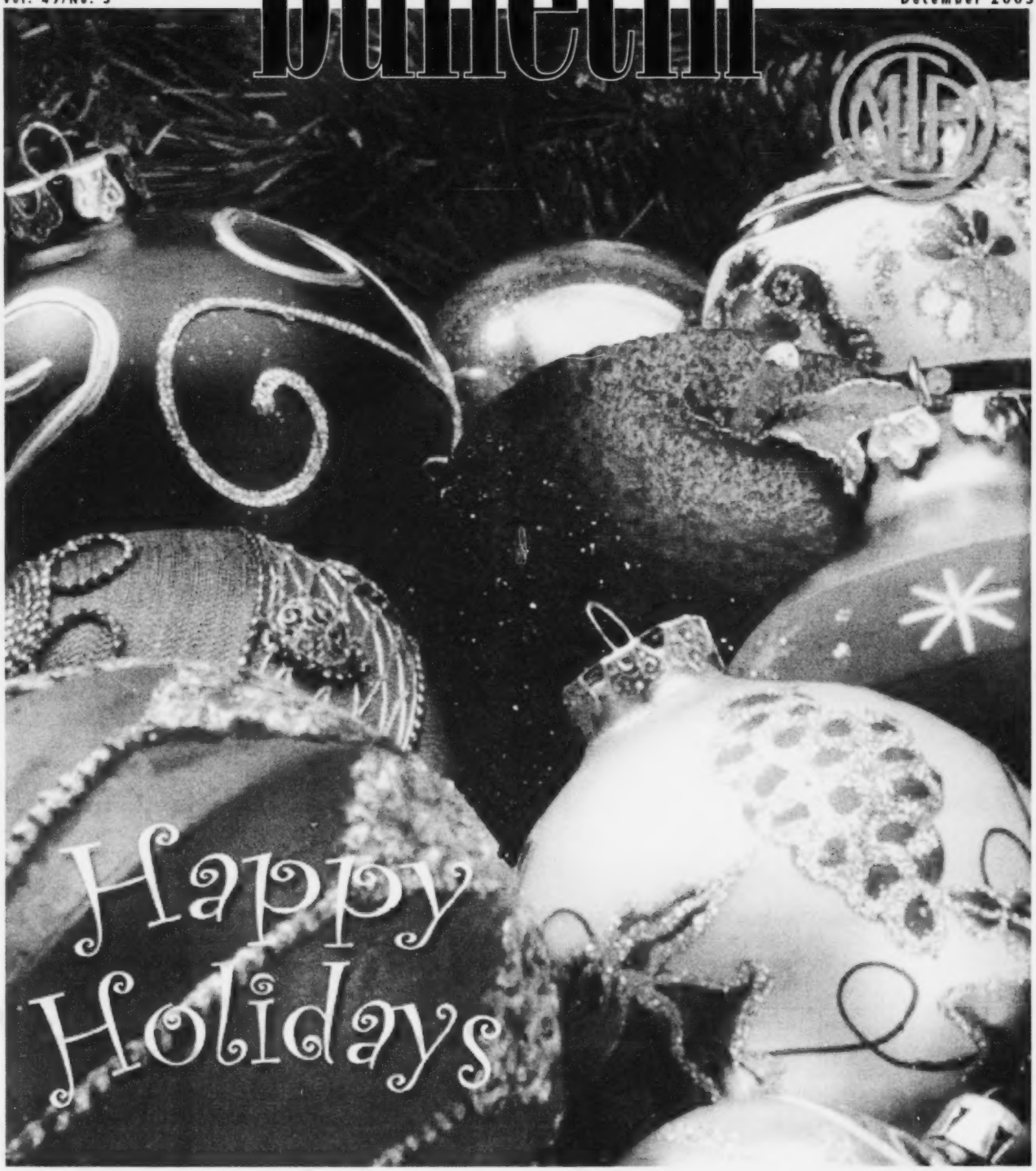
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

Vol. 49/No. 3 December 2005



Up Front from the President

A couple of years ago, while flying from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to St. John's, I read the NLTA brief *Putting the Teacher Back into Teaching*. Reading briefs is not one of my fondest pastimes, but as a then member of Provincial Executive it was expected of me. I recall the sense of gratitude that passed over me mostly, I believe, because I felt that somebody had finally grasped what I had been experiencing as a classroom teacher.

Probably at the same altitude about a year later, this time as vice president, I read Dr. David Dibbon's study *It's About Time*. The feeling this time was more than gratitude – it was satisfaction. Having waited years for the Department of Education and the Schools Boards Association to carry out their legal responsibility, the NLTA finally had to commission their own study. I felt like the case had finally been heard, the jury had been sequestered and the verdict was in. This time my experience as a classroom teacher was proven beyond a reasonable doubt by a reputable researcher.

Recently, Dr. Lynda Younghusband satisfied the requirements for her doctorate in Philosophy through the Faculty of Medicine with a thesis titled *High School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Working Environment in Newfoundland*. As I read through this document the dominant feeling was anger. Why anger? Probably because Dr. Younghusband had masterfully put a human face to what I intuitively knew was occurring to so many of our teachers – and I was angry both because it was happening and because nobody seemed to be listening.

The Department of Education and the School Boards Association certainly did not appear to be listening. The first brief that had been initiated by then president Winston Carter and written by our professional staff told both these groups, among many other things, essentially that there were too many initiatives coming at teachers at once and that there was no gatekeeper. Nobody was screening the new initiatives. It was compared to bringing new furniture into your home without getting rid of the old. Things were too cluttered and, as a result, children were not properly served and teachers were overworked.

Dr. Dibbon's report was presented to the world at a news conference and again to the Department and the School Boards Association. He pointed out how each new task assigned to teachers gets added on to their already busy schedule and, as a result, the workload of teachers becomes intensified. Teachers, because of their conscientiousness, take each new task seriously and take things to heart when they can't keep up. It was Dr. Dibbon who alerted us to the fact that the frustration and stress levels of teachers at school were impacting the family lives of teachers and that new teachers were leaving at an alarming rate. Teachers again expressed concern that their own workload was affecting students.

Yet, they keep coming at us.

It is Dr. Younghusband who points out to us the impact the conditions identified in the first two documents are having on the everyday personal lives of teachers. It is not a pretty picture. This is not a phenomenon that is impacting just a few teachers; this phenomenon is widespread and is impacting thousands of our teachers. Teachers talk about being set up to fail and how this contributes to fatigue and frustration and the hurt that goes with being perceived as a failure.

In my mind there is a lack of understanding of the reality of classroom life. Without that understanding disrespect soon follows. This disrespect can show itself in many ways. It shows itself when it is assumed that it is all right for teachers to travel long distances on buses with pets and luggage and children to attend PD workshops. It shows itself when concerted efforts are made to change parent-teacher conferences away from the traditional day sessions to evening sessions even when it is clearly shown that teachers are already investing large amounts of their time outside the school day on class preparation activities. Wouldn't it be more respectful to change from evening to day sessions for all? It shows itself when teachers are assigned two or three new courses to teach in a new school year. It shows itself when you bring in new initiatives without getting rid of the old. It shows itself when the views and opinions of teachers are not listened to. It shows itself when a teacher is not supported in their dealings with problem students. It shows itself when repairs are not made to damaged property in a timely manner. It shows itself when a workshop for a course is not provided until nine months after a course has been introduced. It is shown when textbooks aren't provided until months after a course has begun (if then). It shows itself when teachers are forced to take sick leave to attend to serious personal matters. Add your own here...

It is time a true understanding of the reality of classroom life returned and with it the respect that this profession deserves.

Kevin

THE
bulletin

Lesley-Ann Browne
Editor

Michelle Lamarche
Editorial Assistant

Linda Babstock, John Bishop,
Elliott Green, Louise King
Design • Printing • Distribution

Linda Farrell
Online Services

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Tel: 709-726-3223; 1-800-563-3599
Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582
e-mail: labrowne@nlta.nl.ca
Internet Address: www.nlta.nl.ca

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Advertising inquiries should be directed to:
Michelle Lamarche, Ext. 227
mlamarche@nlta.nl.ca

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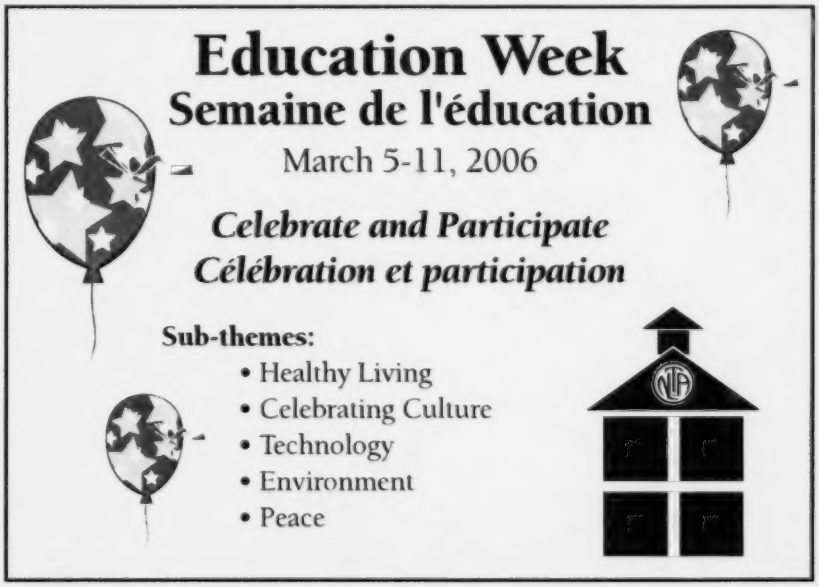

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

DEER LAKE

Xavier's Clean and Green Program

Clean and Green is a program that was started at Xavier Junior High in Deer Lake five years ago. The need for some schoolyard improvements was seen as a priority by both staff and students. All grade levels (6-9) are involved in schoolyard developments. Initially, students brainstormed ideas including areas for socialization and play, gardening, green space and an outdoor classroom. They researched these ideas and put a proposal together for funding. It turned into a great leadership project. The students did an excellent job and as a result, Clarica awarded Xavier $7,000 for the Clean and Green project.

Grade 6 students Jason Reid (left) and Jagger Osmond help water some of the many plants and flowers at Xavier Junior High.

Under the close supervision of Mr. Albert Carroll (a retired teacher from Xavier) and Mrs. Karen Wight, many improvements have been made. Mrs. Wight, who teaches science and home economics at Xavier, is now the primary teacher advisor for the program and she works closely with students and staff. "The maturity and responsibility that the students have shown is outstanding," says Sherri Rose, a music teacher at Xavier Junior High and Elwood Regional High in Deer Lake. "Xavier's staff is very proud of their hard work and effort."

The schoolyard at Xavier has been transformed into a place of beauty. Benches, garden planters, trees, bushes, annuals, perennials and a rock garden have been placed all over the schoolyard for students, teachers and community members to enjoy.

The program has been greatly supported by the Town of Deer Lake Community Improvement Committee as well as other local businesses and organizations. The school's snow clearing contractor helps remove the benches and planters each fall for safe winter storage and local nurseries have made donations over the years to help with ongoing development.

Ms. Rose says this program has taught students a great deal about environmental issues and has led to many other initiatives. Each year the Grade 7 students participate in a town center clean-up in conjunction with Tim Horton's who provide t-shirts, work gloves, garbage bags and refreshments for students. The grade 8 students participate in an annual beach clean-up and they also go to Kildevil camp each year for hands-on outdoor education. As well, the school maintains an active recycling program.

In October, the Town of Deer Lake received a trophy for the Maglin Youth Involvement Project Award in conjunction with the Communities in Bloom program. At the school's annual Thanksgiving Day assembly on October 7, a town representative spoke to students and staff and commended them for their effort and achievement over the past five years. The staff now feel it is time to move toward the next goal – an outdoor classroom. Congratulations students and staff!

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Program encourages students to eat well and get active

The Active Schools Program is an initiative of the Active Living Committee, the Nova Central School Board, and the Central Regional Integrated Health Authority.

This project is being undertaken due to the alarming increase in the rates of childhood obesity and paediatric type 2 diabetes in recent years. This trend threatens to shorten the lives of this generation of

children who will die prematurely due to the complications of obesity including type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

An Active School provides its students with 180 minutes of physical activity in a six-day cycle as well as adopts healthy nutrition practices. The students do 20 minutes of physical activity in their classroom on their non-gym days with the activity being led by regular classroom teachers who integrate the activity into the curriculum.

A pilot project ran last year that saw five primary/elementary schools in Central Newfoundland volunteer to accept the designation of Active School. These schools were William Mercer Academy (Dover), Smallwood Academy (Gambo), Lewisporte Academy (Lewisporte), Greenwood Academy (Campbellton), and Gill Memorial (Musgrave Harbour).

Nearly 1,000 children and 70 teachers took part. The program was very well received and plans are currently in place to implement phase II this year which would see 12 additional schools in the region become Active Schools. This would add nearly 3,000 more students and 200 teachers.

In September, all participants of the Pilot Project gathered at the Gander Community Center for a celebration of one year of healthy living. The program will continue to encourage the students to Eat Well, Play Hard, and Be Strong.

Concours d'art oratoire public speaking competition

Canadian Parents for French, Newfoundland and Labrador (CPF-NL) will be holding its Provincial Concours d'art oratoire (Concours) 2006 public speaking competition at The Battery Hotel and Suites in St. John's on Saturday, May 6, 2006.

Volunteers are needed as judges, questioners, emcees, timekeepers, photographers and set up people to help with the Concours. If teachers are interested in volunteering for this event they are encouraged to contact the Branch office at the numbers listed below.

Canadian Parents for French National will be holding its National Concours on May 26, 2006 at the University of Ottawa. CPF-NL will send five students to Ottawa to represent the province. For more information on the National Concours or to find out how you can get involved in this competition, contact the Branch office at 579-1776 or 1-877-576-1776.

Find the Compound Word Contest

Win an NLTA kit bag!

The words **SNOW** and **BALL** are printed in the December issue of *The Bulletin* to form the compound word **SNOWBALL.**

Find the first part (snow) in the paper copy of *The Bulletin* and note the page # and article or news story where it is contained. Search for the second part (ball) in the online version of *The Bulletin* (www.nlta.nl.ca) and do the same.

Part 1: Page # _____ Article _____

Part 2: Page # _____ Article _____

Send your completed contest entry to either:

Email: mail@nlta.nl.ca

Fax: 726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582

Mail: The Bulletin Contest
3 Kenmount Road
St. John's, NL A1B 1W1

Please include the following information on your entry:

Name: _____

School: _____

Address (where we can mail your prize): _____

_____
Postal Code

Tel: (school) _____ (home) _____

The contest is open to all active and substitute teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Only one entry per teacher.

Deadline: December 22, 2005

All submissions received by the deadline wil be entered for the draw. Email messages will be printed, The first entry drawn that contains the correct information will win! Only one winner per issue. The name of the winner will be published in the next issue of *The Bulletin.*

Arts and Letters Awards Program

Are you creating original material? You can win up to $750 in the 2006 Awards program. Visit the Arts and Letters website for information and regulations at www.gov.nl.ca/artsandletters. Deadline for submissions is January 20, 2006.

NLTA Scholarship winners announced

Six Newfoundland and Labrador students who completed high school last June have been awarded NLTA scholarships for 2004-05. They are: Stephen Aylward (Holy Heart High School), son of Elaine Aylward, Mount Pearl; Rachel Gardiner (St. Kevin's High School), daughter of Robert Gardiner, St. John's; Kathleen House (Gonzaga High School), daughter of Carol Ann Fagan, St. John's; Jessica Jackman, (Bay d'Espoir Academy), daughter of Douglas Jackman, Head of Bay d'Espoir; Bridget Robinson (Carbonear Collegiate), daughter of Maureen Robinson, Harbour Grace; and Jessica Sheppard (Ascension Collegiate), daughter of Nelson Sheppard, Bay Roberts.

The scholarships are awarded annually to dependents of active, retired, disabled, or deceased members of the NLTA and are valued at $1,000 each. Awards are based on the criteria used by the Department of Education for the selection of provincial scholarship recipients.

Stephen Aylward

Rachel Gardiner

Kathleen House

Jessica Jackman

Bridget Robinson

Jessica Sheppard

CANADA

Submissions sought for National Video Competition

The Department of Canadian Heritage invites teams of young people across the country to take part in the 10th annual *Racism. Stop It!* National Video Competition.

This annual competition commemorates March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations first recognized this day in 1966, and Canada was one of the first countries to support the UN declaration. The Department of Canadian Heritage initiated its annual March 21 Campaign in 1989 and launched the *Racism. Stop It!* National Video Competition in 1996.

The competition invites teams of young Canadians, aged 12 to 18, in every province and territory to produce a 60- to 90-second video that represents their thoughts on eliminating racial discrimination. Teachers can help their students by getting them thinking about ways to stop racism and support Canada's multiculturalism.

Creating a video requires little or no acting experience but requires students to have fun. It also allows them the opportunity to move beyond the recognition of the problem of racism and take action to *Stop It!* For students who are unsure of their ability to make a video, there are many helpful tips available on the *Racism. Stop It!* web site.

Videos are judged for originality, audio/visual quality and, most important, the effectiveness of the *Racism. Stop It!* message. The 10 winning teams chosen from across Canada will be invited to an awards ceremony in Ottawa to commemorate March 21.

For more information about the contest, visit the *Racism. Stop It!* National Video Competition web site, www.march21.gc.ca. If you have questions, call the St. John's office of the Department of Canadian Heritage at 772-5364, or toll-free 1-888-77MULTI (1-888-776-8584). The deadline for the competition is January 16, 2006.

CAHPERD National School Challenge program

The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) has new events for the National School Challenge program.

The Jump2bfit Across Canada National School Challenge will take place on Thursday, February 23. Students across Canada will accumulate 8,000 km of jumping across Canada. Students can take a day,

two days or even a week to complete the challenge as long as they start or finish their jump across Canada on February 23.

The SpecTAGular National School Challenge will take place on Thursday, May 25. This year the goal is to have 300,000 participants playing tag for a minimum of 30 minutes. Last year, 260,053 students yelled "Tag! You're It!" in a giant game of tag.

To participate in any of these challenges, register online at www.cahperd.ca/nationalschoolchallenge. When you register you will receive an Event Participation Kit by mail, 4-6 weeks prior to each event. National School Challenges cost $25 per school which covers all registration and Event Participation Kit costs. CAHPERD members can register at a discounted rate.

2006 Toyota Earth Day Scholarship Program

Earth Day Canada, a national non-profit environmental organization, and Toyota Canada Inc. are offering the 2006 Toyota Earth Day Scholarship Program, which rewards graduating high school students across Canada for their efforts to help the environment through school and community activities.

Fifteen scholarships of $5,000 will be awarded across Canada in five geographical regions: Atlantic Canada; Quebec; Western Canada/Northwest Territories/Nunavut; and British Columbia/Yukon. Program information and applications are available in both English and French at www.earthday.ca/scholarship. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2006.

CCGE ready-to-use lesson plans

The Canadian Council for Geographic Education (CCGE) is pleased to offer teachers ready-to-use lesson plans. These lesson plans were written by qualified CCGE teachers and are available for the appropriate curriculum within each provincial and territorial jurisdiction. The CCGE plans to add to this collection of lesson plans yearly so that teachers will have a growing source of ideas to draw from. Log on to http://ccge.org/ccge/english/Resources/LessonPlans/LessonPlans.asp.

These lesson plans are also available in French. Log on to www.ccge.org and follow the French links.

Nominations invited for Historica Foundation Volunteer Service Awards

The Historica Foundation invites annual nominations for its Volunteer Service Awards. Any individuals, organizations or agencies that have contributed outstanding volunteer leadership or service to assist Historica in its efforts to improve the quality of history education are eligible to be nominated.

Three levels of awards are to be presented, based on years of volunteer service. Nominations will be accepted in the following categories: Gold – Continued volunteer service for a period of 10 years or more; exceptional contributions that merit special consideration; Silver – Continued volunteer service for a period of six years or more; and Bronze – Continued volunteer service for a period of three years or more.

Nominees must have distinguished themselves by contributing their time and talents to meet the needs of students and communities served by Historica programs.

Award recipients will be announced at the annual Historica Fair. All nominations should be submitted by January 31, 2006 to Becky Burns, National Manager, Historica Fairs Program, bburns@histori.ca. For further information visit www.histori.ca.

Tales Told by Teachers Volume I

Need a great gift idea? This is it!
And what a bargain: only **$12.95!**
(plus postage where applicable)

Published by the Retired Teachers' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998, the first printing of 2,000 copies sold out in just over three months.

Contains 131 stories, poems, amusing anecdotes – recalled by 98 retired teachers: "tales out of school" to make you laugh or cry – nostalgia at its best!

Order by phone, e-mail, or post:
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Clayton Rice, 709-753-3920, clayton@warp.nfld.net
RTANL, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1

Gene Researcher for a Week 2006

Do you wonder what it would be like to do cutting-edge genetic research, learn how genes cause human disease and how scientists find cures and treatments for genetic diseases like Cystic Fibrosis, heart disease, Diabetes and certain types of cancer?

For the fourth year, Canadian high school students in grades 11 and 12 are being given the opportunity to spend their week of spring break in the genetic research labs of top Canadian scientists. Eligible students are invited to apply for Gene Researcher for a Week – The Rt. Hon. Ramon Hnatyshyn Youth in Science Initiative.

Genetic technology is everywhere…Do you wonder what people on TV and in movies are doing with DNA? Here is your chance to find out. Students selected for Gene Researcher for a Week could get the chance to work with DNA, RNA and proteins, DNA isolation and purification, PCR, SDS-Page, gel electrophoresis, DNA sequencing and Western blotting.

This is a totally unique experience. Only 30 students from across Canada will be chosen to spend their spring break in the lab of one of Canada's leading gene researchers. You will work alongside scientists, graduate students and technicians to plan and carry out experiments. You will learn techniques and procedures that genetic researchers use to study human disease. You will attend lab meetings and get first-hand experience with what it is like to work in a hospital or research institute.

Expenses will be covered. The selected students will receive a daily transportation and meal allowance. Students requiring air travel will receive a travel and accommodation bursary in addition to a daily meal and transportation allowance.

For more information and how to apply, visit www.cgdn.ca, follow the link on the main page and complete the on-line application. If you have questions, e-mail Leslie Mauro, Manager, Communications, at lmauro@cgdn.ca or call (604) 221-7300, ext. 110.

Deadline for applications and reference letters is December 31st, 2005.

MARGUERITE DUFFY, 1917 – 2005

On September 4, 2005 Marguerite Duffy of Port au Port East passed away at the age of 87 years. She and her late husband Jim had six children. She is pre-deceased by baby daughter Maureen in 1954, son James in 1991, son Brian in 1999, and grandson Bobby Duffy in 1987.

Marguerite Duffy began her teaching career in Port au Port in 1940. She taught for 26 years and contributed to the success of generations of children.

When I began teaching in 1970, she was a fellow teacher in a neighboring school. I remember Mrs. Duffy best, however, as my Grade 10 teacher.

She was, without doubt, from the old school. She demanded respect and cooperation from her students and we gave it to her. There was no goofing off in her classroom. We may have resented her hard line approach, but we appreciated the success we achieved because of it.

Mrs. Duffy knew every student in our school. She knew our parents, our siblings, and I'd swear that, like Santa Claus, she knew when we were naughty or nice. When we were the former, we answered to her whether it happened in school or anywhere else on the planet.

Marguerite genuinely cared for her students. She was interested in every aspect of our lives and she gave up personal time to ensure that we succeeded.

Each year during the weeks leading to final exams, she spent her evenings and Saturdays tutoring students. Former colleague, Ida Hawco, remembers Marguerite as a teacher who got results. Whether in her role as principal, vice-principal, or classroom teacher, the students came first.

Marguerite Duffy exemplified dedication to her profession. Surviving children, Jerry (Marie), Neil (Eva), and Mary Kelly (Gus) know that their mother never wavered in her approach to her profession or in her approach to life. She battled illness for many years and her family and friends are comforted that she is finally at peace.

(Submitted by Wayne White on behalf of the Duffy Family.)

FRED BUTLER, 1949 – 2005

Our world shattered on August 29 with the sudden and tragic death of Fred Butler, our dear friend and colleague.

Fred began his teaching career in Grand Falls. He then moved to Macdonald Drive in St. John's, and for nearly 20 years he blessed us with his presence at Mary Queen of Peace. Every morning we were greeted with that wonderful smile and a cheerful "Good Morning", and coffee on the brew.

Fred was a superb teacher who was giving, caring, loving, kind, patient, fun loving and compassionate. His students always got the best from him. He was an inspiration to many of his students and colleagues. Needed something done, ask Fred; needed an ear to listen, talk to Fred; needed a word of encouragement or a hug, go to Fred; needed someone to dance with, ask Fred; needed a dessert made, ask Fred; needed an answer to a question, ask the Oracle; needed your bacon cooked properly, get Fred to do it; needed a walking partner, go with Fred (if you dare).

I could go on and on, but words are inadequate and cannot do justice to the person who was Fred. Fred's life was a lifetime of giving and this giving went far beyond the teacher, the colleague and friend. He was the same wonderful Fred to his long-time partner, Dan, to his mother and father (predeceased), his brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews and other special friends. To all of them, sincerest and deepest sympathy is extended. Fred, who was loved by so many and loved so much, will be sorely and truly missed, but we will honour the beautiful memories, celebrate a gracious spirit, remember a wonderful life and carry him always with us in our hearts, souls and minds.

Fly high and soar with the angels, Fred.

(Submitted by Eileen Carson, long-time friend, colleague and Whitbourne Weekender.)

Fred Butler

GERALDINE (FITZGERALD) KAVANAGH, 1950 – 2005

Life is a fight, accept it.
Life is an adventure, run the risk.
Life is richness, make a treasure of it.

– Mother Teresa

Geri Kavanagh lived this tenet up to the moment of her death on February 2, 2005.

Geri was an adventurer from the day that I knew her. She loved to travel. From her first foray to England in 1971, her wanderlust grew. A trip had only to be mentioned and Geri would be online to book a trip to Cuba, Vancouver, the Dominican Republic, Russia, Italy, or Ireland. Even as she lay dying, Geri wished she could travel to Africa to volunteer and travel.

Geri transferred that adventure to cooking. An accomplished cook, she loved to experiment, tracking down ingredients and serving them up as well as any culinary artist. When she fell ill, she turned the same passion into organic cooking. It was healthful and interesting to all of us.

One of Geri's greatest passions in the last few years was hiking. She introduced us to the beauty of Eastern Newfoundland in the many East Coast Trails. Geri showed her true appreciation for life on these walks. She never missed anything, always wanting to see each "View Point". Even four months before her death, on her last hike to Lamanche, she led us to Doctor's Cove where in the sunshine we decided that life at that moment was beautiful and good. Geri shared the love of these trails, not only with her friends, but with John, her children, and nieces and nephews. Each hike was immortalized in the pictures she took.

Geri loved her family and her home. Santa Claus parades, birthday parties, hockey games, ballet, movies with half the kids on the street, Geri was there. In later days she got involved in her children's adult lives. She liked nothing more than to travel to see Kim and Suj in Toronto or Vancouver or to help Stephen and Susan fix their home or visit Jonathan in Russia.

Geri was an organizer extraordinaire. She had tests back to her students the day following a test. She had the bridge schedules organized each year, with everyone's preferences. She had her Christmas cakes made on the November 11th weekend.

Geri took on her illness like a hero. She investigated conventional and alternate treatments. She followed an organic diet rigidly, and she was open with her friends. While she didn't broadcast her illness to all and sundry, she kept her friends informed. I am sure she was healthy for such a long time because she saw the measures she had to take and took them without complaint. She was up on her cancer and made many contacts on the Internet with others who shared the same disease. They say a critical illness gives you a new outlook on life and that sure happened to Geri. She took an interest in everything and everybody and seemed to savor everything whether it was food, a walk up Signal Hill, a garden or a concert. Little acts of kindness to others became paramount to her. Geri showed us how to live and how to die.

Geri taught at Holy Heart of Mary High School her whole teaching career. Quiet, thoughtful and intelligent, Geri guided her students in Math and Chemistry. Students and colleagues alike admired her.

Geri leaves to mourn her husband John, her children Kim (Sujindar), Stephen (Susan) and Jonathan, her mother, brother and sister, as well as her many friends.

(Submitted by Ellen Murphy, friend and colleague.)

Geri Kavanagh

The Season for Giving

BY EDWARD HANCOCK

As the Christmas season quickly approaches, it is indeed a pleasure to once again have the opportunity to extend best wishes to each of you and your families. On behalf of all the staff at the NLTA, I offer best wishes for a joyful Christmas time and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Christmas! The season for giving! Christmas indeed is the focal point of the year for gifts, an outpouring of generosity, and the giving of one's self to see that look of anticipation and delight in the face of a child or loved one. But, as teachers, you give of yourselves every day in putting forward your utmost efforts to see that your students succeed. That giving occurs throughout the school year and throughout a teacher's career and is not limited to a season of the year. The Roman orator and politician Cicero asked "What greater or better gift can we offer society than to teach and instruct our youth?" What greater gift, indeed? Your daily efforts are indeed "gifts" bestowed on your students. Thus, as we approach the "season of giving", commit to give yourself the gift of time away from the hectic pace of a teacher's life for a short while to relax, recharge, and reconnect to family and friends.

The fall has been no doubt a busy period for each of you, as the fall of every new school year consistently is. You constantly face numerous challenges in nurturing every child to his/her fullest potential and you meet those challenges with skill, experience and ingenuity. Keep the value of what you are doing in mind during those times when the challenges seem greatest, and take advantage of the "break" that this season affords as a much-deserved reward for your efforts of the fall.

The impact a teacher has on his/her students may not always be immediately apparent but it can be significant in many students' lives. The American educator Hyman Berston described a teacher as "the child's third parent". Many of us have experienced that adult realization of the importance of certain teachers in our own lives, an importance that may have nothing to do with the curriculum.

In my nearly 20 years on the NLTA Administrative Staff (and my 13 years of voluntary involvement with the Association preceding that), I have had the good fortune to meet and talk to many of our members in communities all over this province. I have had the opportunity to see the fabulous work that you are doing under circumstances that are often trying, to say the least. When I meet someone from outside the teaching profession for the first time, and I am asked what I do for a living, it is with pride that I say that I work for teachers and for the NLTA.

May the peace and love that are the essence of the Christmas message be with you throughout the holiday season and afterwards. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

"Blessed is the season that engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."

– Hamilton Wright Mabi

Ed

Financial Planning

by DON ASH

Do most teachers have expertise in financial planning, or give time and consideration to planning their financial future? My experience in facilitating the pre-retirement seminars during the last seven years leads me to conclude that they do not. In fact, a most regular comment made at these seminars regarding pension, financial planning and estate management is that "I wish I had this information years ago." Perhaps it is a heavy workload or limited opportunity to hear financial planning presentations that prevent teachers from accessing the relevant information. Regardless, teachers should take the time to give consideration to their financial futures. This article is intended to stimulate such planning.

Point I: To maximize his/her pension, every teacher should obtain Certificate VII prior to his/her last five years of teaching.

A teacher's pension is based on a defined benefit of the total accrued pension times the best five-year average salary. Currently, teachers accrue 2% pension for every year they work and pay into the main Teachers' Pension Plan. For example, a teacher who has 33 years of pensionable service at 2% per year will have a pension accrual of 66 % (33 x 2%). The actual dollar amount of pension for this teacher is 66% times their best five-year average salary. This five-year average is extremely important. Consider a teacher with 66% pension accrual at the time of retirement and his/her pension based on certificate level in the last five years of teaching.

Certificate	Annual Salary (2005)	Pension Accrual Rate	Annual Pension
V	$51,985	0.66	$34,310
VI	$60,212	0.66	$39,740
VII	$68,117	0.66	$44,957

That is over a $10,000 annual difference in pension, or over a 31% higher pension, for a teacher with Certificate VII, rather than Certificate V.

Statistically, the average teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador is on pension over 30 years. At $10,000 per year this teacher, and you, can increase retirement income by $300,000 over a lifetime by obtaining Certificate VII.

One semester educational leaves are available under the collective agreement at 80 percent salary to assist teachers pursuing certificate upgrades. Information and application forms are available through the Professional Development Division of the NLTA and in *The Bulletin*.

Point II: Financial Planning for younger teachers is especially important.

While older teachers had the opportunity to purchase four university years for pension purposes and the advantage of an accrual rate of 2.22% prior to 1991, younger teachers do not. Consequently, older teachers can retire after 30 years of teaching with pensions in the vicinity of 70%, and subsequently take home incomes that can maintain a similar lifestyle as when working. However, younger teachers are unlikely to be able to sustain a similar lifestyle as when working based on a 60% pension. Younger teachers should begin planning and consider RRSPs or alternative savings to supplement their pension upon retirement.

Point III: Financial Planning information sessions are available at no cost.

While most of us know about the tax benefit of contributing to an RRSP, many of us do not know the regulations and tax implications for withdrawing RRSPs. This information is available from financial institutions and financial planners. The NLTA is not in the business of providing individual financial advice, but presentations are available from financial institutions and certified financial planners. For example, the Newfoundland and Labrador Credit Union is offering RRSP Education Seminars to the general public this winter. Similar sessions are, no doubt, available from other financial groups at no cost. (See advertisement on page 17.)

The good news is that we are living longer and are likely to be active and healthy for many years after retirement. It is increasingly important that we undertake financial planning that assures us the ability to maintain a financial quality of life that we desire in retirement. It is necessary to begin early planning.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Burdened by Work Pressures and Demands

by Dr. Lynda Younghusband

I have never worked in a coal mine, or a uranium mine, or in a herring trawler; but I know from experience that working in a bank from 9:15 to 5:30, and once in four weeks the whole of Saturday, with two weeks holidays a year, was a rest cure compared to teaching in a school. – T.S. Eliot (1950)

In 2000 I conducted a survey of teachers in one large school district to determine the level of stress associated with teaching. Seventy-four percent of teacher participants reported that they felt stressed "much or most of the time." Concerned about the results of that study and the effects of stress on teachers' health, I decided to begin doctoral studies to explore in depth the phenomenon of stress in the teaching profession in this province.

The objective of this study was to develop an understanding of the environment in which teachers work, of the separate and interactive effects of teacher stress, the factors contributing to high levels of stress, and the weight and importance teachers place on these factors. I believed that this would contribute to the direction in which we should move to alleviate stress in the profession in this province

This qualitative study used grounded theory to explore high school teachers' perceptions of their working environment, particularly their experiences of stress. The objective of grounded theory is to understand how a group of people defines their reality and to communicate this in the form of theory. In this study the goal was to create a substantive theory that would capture the reality of teacher stress in the workplace.

Interviews were conducted with 16 high school teachers, from 24 to 55 years of age, in rural and urban areas of the province in 2002. The constant comparative method of analysis was used to generate three theoretical constructs: the struggle to balance multiple demands (feeling burdened by work pressures and demands, barriers to teacher effectiveness), the importance of supportive work environments (feeling unsupported by administration, value of a collegial community, importance of having adequate resources), and the realities of stress (participants' understanding of stress, self-concept, the taboo of stress, feeling consumed by the job, interference with personal life). What follows here is a brief outline of the first construct, the struggle to balance multiple demands.

The interview transcripts provided a rich database on the participants' experiences of their work environment and the stress that they felt in a workplace that they described as intense and demanding, often to the detriment of their health and well-being. The stigma associated with stress had prevented these teachers from speaking out until they were interviewed. It was their perception that the effort to remain effective at a high level was taking its toll, not just with them but also with many of their colleagues. Job pressures have increased and supportive mechanisms have been eroded as a result of restructuring and downsizing and consequently, teachers felt that their vulnerability to stress in their workplace had increased.

Teachers spoke about the difficulties of maintaining some semblance of control and some sense of balance in their lives while working in an environment they described as "non-stop." One of the greatest sources of frustration and concern for these teachers was the constant struggle to balance the day-to-day demands and pressures of the job. Participants described themselves as "overwhelmed" by the demands placed upon them and the limited time available to meet these demands. They reported increasing responsibilities while at the same time facing work stressors and barriers that were perceived as limiting their work performance effectiveness. Added to these concerns were higher job performance expectations from administration and greater accountability demands. Class size was perceived as exacerbating the day-to-day pressures and this posed barriers to effective teaching.

Restructuring, new curricula, and the implementation of Pathways and inclusive classes have created new demands that have left teachers feeling burdened and under increasing pressure. The teachers in this study reported feeling "bombarded" by the demands to do more and more in an ever-changing

environment. They described their days as without any personal time, no time to reflect or catch their breath. The combination of demands, often seen as "impossible," and the pressure to meet those demands interfered with their external and internal productivity. Balancing the number of tasks required of them within a defined time line (i.e., the work day, the work week) caused increasing pressure.

Teachers reported what they perceived to be a requirement for excessive and constant documentation to support course objectives and student progress. Recording tactics and strategies used to meet course objectives and to provide evidence of meeting obligations to students and parents has increased record keeping substantially. Many teachers found the amount of paperwork associated with being accountable particularly burdensome. They expressed concerns about the time associated with documentation and the feelings that these expectations are unrealistic.

One teacher summed up the feelings and frustrations of his colleagues thus: *You're being bogged down by paperwork. Being accountable is fine but I think they've gone too far. People are burdened.*

Trying to balance the workload, get it all accomplished, often without a break in the day, was clearly difficult for everyone. As one teacher said: *It's nonstop being out there all day.* Another said: *Always on the run from this to that, from this to that, and feeling on edge and trying to fit everything in, constantly. This is difficult, constantly feeling as though there is something to do and you can't sit down and rest, not ever.*

Struggling with the day-to-day pressures of a workload that seemed unmanageable appeared to be a constant source of stress for these teachers. *Totally overwhelming* was how a math teacher described it: *... you sit there and you've got three or four piles of stuff and sometimes [pause] where do I start? And how will I ever get it finished?*

There did not seem to be enough hours in the day for this next teacher who did not like the position in which he saw himself placed, that of possible failure. *It doesn't end at 5 pm... calling parents, tracking down things, preparing things for the next day... correcting [tests]... There's the logistics of it, the reality fit when you're dealing with kids; it never gets done in 15 minutes, between the questions asked and everything else. It's a balancing act. [pause] You're trying to juggle and balance the demands... I don't like being set up as a failure... I don't think there's a physical way of accomplishing it... I come home with just as much work, the work I planned to do [in prep period] is now pushed into the night [pause] and that paperwork!*

One teacher expressed her concern not just for herself but also for her students. Her fatigue and frustration were apparent in her voice, her body language, and her words as she evaluated her work environment. She echoed the feelings of her colleagues regarding the unfeasible expectations of the teaching profession: *Impossible is a good word. Insurmountable ...I am not superhuman ... I can't do it. I really can not do it.*

In addition to the classroom pressures and demands, teachers reported numerous non-teaching duties that exacerbated the burdened feeling they were experiencing. Supervision, parent meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings and extracurricular activities extended the working day both before and after normal school hours. These non-teaching duties were described by one teacher as: *Steady belt, over and over.* For many teachers, the requests for meetings from parents or administrators, whether programme-related or student-related, were perceived as reaching overload proportions. Besides the meetings, phone calls to parents, often in the evening hours, created further demands. There was little time to reflect, to organize thoughts, to keep track of everyone and everything. The pervasive impact of extra non-teaching demands is captured in this teacher's commentary. *I think in my case it was getting to the point where other aspects of my life really didn't seem to exist. It just got to the point where work seemed to be all that you had time to do.*

In summary, these teachers described themselves as burdened with the pressures of work and the constant demands upon their time and personal resources. A portrait evolved of individuals who felt overwhelmed trying to manage their workload and increasing demands while being accountable for student outcomes and their own performance. Despite working at a tremendous pace and trying to prioritize the many tasks demanded of them, they feared being perceived as a failure. Study participants seemed to question how they could continue at such a hectic pace. One teacher summed it up best: *It all adds up to over and beyond what you can humanly expect most people to perform.*

The results of this study provide new insights into the serious problem of teacher stress in this province and the repercussions on their personal and professional lives. The implications for teachers, the education system, and further research on teachers' stress will be discussed in a future report to *The Bulletin*.

Dr. Lynda Younghusband is a retired school counselor, a former teacher and before that, a nurse. Teachers' health has long been a concern of hers and stimulated her interest in stress which in turn led to her doctoral research. Lynda has been a sessional lecturer at Memorial University since 1999. She can be contacted at ybnb@nfld.net.

Discovering Your Magical Mystery

by BEVERLEY PARK

It's nearly holiday time and, even without the benefit of a crystal ball, I can tell that you are looking forward to a break. Teaching is not easy – even for those master teachers who make it appear so. This is a chance for you to regain some of your mental and physical energy. Even the later-than-usual nights and the partying that goes along with the festive season is not as fatiguing as some of the long hours you spend planning and preparing for lessons and grading assignments and tests. If you are traveling "back home" for Christmas, you can anticipate a lot of questions from your family and friends. So, what are you going to tell them? Take a moment to reflect on something that really touched you, something that surprised you, something that you have learned. Think back over the first few months and identify a time when you were proud of your students, a time when you were proud of yourself. Hopefully, you'll have lots of positive things to recount over the dinner table or the pool table during the holidays.

By now you have discovered that there's no such thing as a typical day; no such thing as an average student. You have likely found out that there are as many learning styles as there are students and as many teaching styles as there are teachers. We are all unique, both as learners and as teachers. That's what makes the job so fascinating, not to mention challenging.

Buckminster Fuller said that "understanding one's own magical mystery is one of the teacher's most important assets if (s)he is to understand that everyone is thus differently equipped." Have you come to understand your own magical mystery? Have you found the thing that makes you connect to your students? Have you found the way to your students' hearts and minds?

While the complex activity of teaching cannot be easily described, in a recent lecture, Dr. Edward Pajak of Johns Hopkins University explained a simple but interesting way to view teaching styles. With his permission, I will share them with you here.

Some teachers, says Pajak, can be categorized as "knowing." They primarily view their role as helping students acquire knowledge and skills and learn to reorganize information. He uses the phrase "step by step" to characterize their teaching style.

Another group of teachers, those who are more focused on helping students understand and respect themselves and cooperate with others, he denotes as "caring teachers" who operate "friend by friend."

A third teacher type, the "inventing teacher" works "idea by idea" to help students collect and examine data to learn to reach logical conclusions.

Finally, Pajak talks about the teacher who is most inclined to go "dream by dream" as she or he helps students express personal values and develop a sense of vitality and purpose in life. These teachers he called "inspiring teachers."

But, as Pajak cautioned, it isn't about classifying people or putting them in a box. In fact, we need to be knowing, caring, inventing and inspiring. For the purposes of this article, it's about having you think about who you are as a teacher, the values you hold, the philosophy you espouse, the image you project. I hold firm to the adage:

You teach some by what you say (your content).
You teach more by how you say it (your technique).
You teach most by who you are.

When you are in your classrooms or in your school corridor or cafeteria, who are you? What is the magical mystery you have within you? Like the gifts you received at Christmas you have to unwrap that mystery and reveal it to yourself, to your colleagues and your students every day!

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

What Do School Teachers and Sumo Wrestlers Have in Common?

by BEVERLEY PARK

This was one of several questions discussed in the recently released book, *Freakonomics*, by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, which is, as the title suggests, a rogue economist's exploration of the hidden side of everything. The whole book is devoted to asking what would appear to be crazy questions and pursuing their responses to reveal some pretty amazing facts. It reaffirms what I have always believed: there is no such thing as a dumb question.

Some time ago when we were working with the teacher induction program, a colleague, Steve Brooks, came up with a wonderful activity for new teachers as they were preparing for their very first day of school, to brainstorm all the questions they could think of that had occurred to them, haunted them, kept them awake at night. He prefaced the activity by saying just that: There is no such thing as a stupid question. Teachers opened up and freely asked their questions on everything from essential learning outcomes to parking lot practices, from staff room etiquette to copyright laws. They went away with a wealth of information they might otherwise have had to find out the hard way!

Roland Barth, founding director of the Principal's Center at Harvard University wrote a wonderful article in which he identified nine elements which he considered to be a part of his vision of a good school. One of those key elements was that school should be a place for philosophers. Why philosophers? Because they ask "why?". Five and six-year-olds are constantly asking why things are the way they are. If that were to be promoted throughout their schooling we would have what he refers to it as a culture of inquiry. I like that! I would love to be in such a school. Unfortunately, we too often censor ourselves and we are taught at a young age to curtail our very natural tendency to be inquisitive. As a result, both students and teachers all too often do things without questioning them.

To ask "why" something is done a certain way may be perceived as a challenge to authority. To ask "how" is seen to be a sign of weakness or incompetence.

Socrates, one of the most respected teachers in history, was uncompromising in his search for answers and his persistent interrogation of what people took for granted eventually cost him his life! His name is given to that method of teaching that is a constant inquiry, the Socratic Method. Unfortunately, this unpeeling of the layers of truth can lead people to come face to face with the fact that their "habitual" practice has no foundation beyond tradition.

Socrates is known as the fist martyr of philosophy, and while I do not want to make martyrs of you all, I am challenging you to ask at least one "why" question this year. Perhaps you will ask yourself why you do things a certain way (assigning homework or arranging your class) or perhaps you will ask why the staff meeting or assemblies or parent conferences are designed the way they are. Maybe you will ask a "big picture" question such as why is the education system working for some and not for others?

There may not be easy answers – or maybe no answer at all, yet I truly believe that the questions bear asking. Like Levitt and Dubner, I believe that truly, if you ask enough questions, strange as they may seem at the time, you are bound to learn something. And by the way, they did actually find an answer to the question "What do school teachers and sumo wrestlers have in common?", but you'll have to read the book to find out!

Freakonomics, a 2005 New York Times bestseller by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, is published by William Morrow, Harper Collins, and is available now at most bookstores. (ISBN 0-06-073132-X)

Project Overseas 2005

The Pearl in an Oyster

by BETTY HEARN

Finding a pearl in an oyster has such nostalgia attached to it, such richness and such promise. I think we all want to experience that joy, whether it is winning the lottery or experiencing the adventure of a lifetime. My pearl was an opportunity with Project Overseas this past summer. It was priceless. Sir Winston Churchill named the country of Uganda as the "Pearl of Africa" and now I know why.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), through its Project Overseas Program, has been sending volunteer Canadian teachers to various countries around the world for over 40 years. In July, after a brief orientation in Ottawa, I was fortunate enough to join three other Canadian teachers for a rewarding and memorable experience in Uganda, Africa.

From the moment our team landed at Uganda's modern and efficient international airport, I felt the warmth of the country welcome me. With its breathtaking equatorial location on the shores of Lake Victoria, bordering countries of Rwanda and the Congo on the west, Sudan to the north and Kenya on the east, it was clear why Uganda is know as the Pearl of Africa. The natural beauty of this country was only matched by that of the people we were about to meet.

With a population of roughly 22 million, the government of Uganda is considered stable with signs of progressive initiatives in education and health care. They have introduced a policy of "Education for All" that has the schools bursting at the seams with students that previously could not afford to be there. Unfortunately, the infrastructure for this program hasn't caught up yet. Teachers are dealing with classroom sizes of up to 70 students per teacher, not nearly enough desks to go around and even less in curriculum resources. Uganda has won international recognition for introducing a health policy to combat the AIDS epidemic that is haunting many African countries. Sadly enough, the life expectancy is still only 46 years. In Canada, we enjoy life expectancy close to 80 years. The difference speaks volumes of the difficulties faced by Ugandans every day.

The capital city of Kampala is a bustling place where our team was to live and work for two weeks. We were welcomed to the city by staff of the Uganda Teacher's Union (UNATU). The union is in the early stages of development and as expected, are going through some growing pains, especially with recruitment since membership is voluntary. They are, however, making great progress regarding empowerment, training and support of teachers.

By now we knew our assignment was to spend two weeks at Kyambogo University doing workshops with teachers' college personnel. We presented to over 50 teacher trainers from Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs) throughout Uganda. Our participants travelled many miles to avail of an opportunity for professional development. Some drove, others used public transport such as the motorcycle taxis called 'buda budas', which was something I dared not try.

Our in-service program was developed with the leadership of UNATU personnel and the support of co-tutors assigned to each of us. Classes ran from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The breaks for morning and afternoon tea were a pleasant reprieve from the heat of the classroom and it was such a joy to socialize with our fellow Ugandan teachers. They were not only highly qualified and industrious, but their enthusiasm and respect for education was quite refreshing and inspiring.

Plenary sessions were offered in areas such as AIDS education, gender equity, and classroom management. The remaining sessions were divided into Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. Our teacher-trainers were looking for practical hands-on teaching ideas that were easy to prepare and that utilized local materials. As well, they were anxious to hear about strategies for program delivery and classroom management practised in our Canadian schools. The truth was that we learned as much from them since their reality is to prepare teachers for huge class sizes and with precious little resources.

Although our days were quite intense and true to form, with plenty of homework every night, we did take time out to celebrate with a Uganda night.

The costumes, the music, dance and refreshments allowed us to better appreciate how lucky we were to be sharing in their culture. Not to be outdone of course, we showered them with a splash of "Great Big Sea", plenty of flags, pictures, prizes and postcards, plus a taste of real maple syrup.

The two weeks flew too quickly but there was time afterward to visit some of Uganda's treasures. We took a trip to Jinja, a nearby town, where we had a picture moment at the site of the source of the Nile on Lake Victoria. A moment of enlightenment as it dawned on me that the majestic Nile River begins there in southeast Africa and flows north to the Mediterranean, and not the other way around! The highlight of the day was an opportunity to visit the Jinja Primary Teacher College and the neighbouring primary school. Class sizes are definitely a challenge and it stretches the imagination to envision how teachers cope and perform with numbers of 70 plus. The teachers appear to be very professional but strained by their workload demands. Music and dance presented by the students warmed our hearts as we all gathered on the playground for some impromptu entertainment.

Students of Kyambogo Primary School in the capital city of Kampala, Uganda.

Ugandan teachers and students are challenged with overcrowded classes, limited textbooks, few to no school resources, a lack of adequate nutrition, gender disparity and an AIDS epidemic. All this is countered with a people that are rich in culture and have a strong sense of integrity. Their joy and gratitude was expressed everyday by how we felt welcomed.

I will be forever changed by my experiences in Uganda and eternally grateful to the NLTA and CTF for providing me this opportunity. A special note of thanks goes to Beverley Park who herself has worked in Uganda. Her support in preparing for this professional pilgrimage was invaluable.

Betty Hearn is a Teacher-Librarian at Macdonald Drive Junior High in St. John's.

The Night Commuters of Uganda
Students Do the GuluWalk

by BETTY HEARN

Where's Gulu? This question recently teased the students of Macdonald Drive Junior High (MDJH) in St. John's. In time, the answer became known. Gulu is a large town in Northern Uganda.

Why plan a GuluWalk?

The students and staff of Macdonald Drive Junior High School formed a sea of orange as they carried a banner of hope on their walk on October 21, 2005. Their cause was one we hear too little about in this part of the world. MDJH students learned about the plight of their fellows in Northern Uganda. Every night, up to 40,000 children living in rural areas walk from their homes, to safer havens. These 'night commuters' have no choice but walk into urban centres such as Gulu. There, they sleep in relative safety and manage to escape the rebel army know as the Lords Resistance Army (LRA). Their story is gruesome and the statistics are phenomenal.

Twenty thousand children have been abducted by the LRA in Northern Uganda and over 90% of Acholi people – 80% of them women and children – have been displaced in camps that offer neither security nor basic provisions. This war has paralysed an entire nation with fear, forever altering families, cultural traditions and way of life for an entire generation.

Kids outside wearing the Gulu orange prior to the walk.

What started as an attempt by two average Canadians to better understand the ordeal of these courageous children, has grown into an urgent, impassioned, worldwide movement for peace. 'GuluWalk Day' developed from the worldwide response to the original GuluWalk, which lasted for 31 days and saw Adrian Bradbury and Kieran Hayward conducting their own 'night commute' in Toronto. Every night in July, 2005 they walked 12.5 km into downtown Toronto to sleep in front of city hall. Resting only four hours, they made the trek home at sunrise, all while continuing to work full-time and attempting to maintain their daily routine.

It was this first GuluWalk that inspired me. I was in Uganda in July as a volunteer with Project Overseas, (see article on pages 16-17) and having read about the efforts of Bradbury and Hayward in a Ugandan newspaper, I knew that this story had to be told in Newfoundland as well.

Betty Hearn with the class that focused the school's attention to this cause.

The GuluWalk at Macdonald Drive was a roaring success with the students donning a collage of orange t-shirts, pants and even orange sneakers. To the rhythms of Africa, the students walked proudly as a gesture of 'children walking for children'. Their goal was to promote awareness and cause change. They became the voices for those trapped in the silent war of Northern Uganda. This whole school effort was co-ordinated by a Grade 9 Religion class who became

the official "Gulu Team". With the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Barry White, and myself, they created an awareness program throughout the school. Posters, class presentations and the sale of orange GuluWalk wristbands called the entire student body to action.

On October 21, The GuluWalk at Macdonald Drive Junior High became a prelude to the international GuluWalk Day that took place on Saturday, October 22, in more than 43 cities worldwide.

Girls and drummers walking around Kenny's Pond with the banner and sign used to help sell wrist bands.

MDJH students assembled in the gym for a warm reception of guest speakers and performers who energized them to walk and tell the story of those who do it everyday in Northern Uganda. Following a Powerpoint presentation that summed up the story quite vividly, local artists Terry Rielly and Ian Goudie encouraged students with their songs of peace. As well, local musicians and performers, Mopaya and Curtis Andrews with his Dzolali Dancers transported the audience to the continent of Africa with their true-flavoured African music. The guest speaker was Ms. Grace Okwera who is from the town of Gulu in Uganda and has been living in St. John's for the past 12 years. She spoke passionately about her gratitude for this movement by such young students. Following the lead of three local drummers, all 650 students and staff paraded out of the gym and around Kenny's Pond in a symbolic walk of support.

The students of Macdonald Drive Junior High have become the voice of the Gulu night commuters. They have raised in excess of $1,000 in donations and sales. Their efforts were acknowledged by media networks including CBC Television, CBC Radio, NTV, *The Express* and *The Telegram*. What better way to tell a story that needed to be told!

Please continue the story of the 'night commuters' of Uganda by finding more information on the website: www.guluwalk.com.

Betty Hearn is a Teahcer-Librarian at Macdonald Drive Junior High in St. John's.

The Asper Foundation's Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program

Taking Personal Responsibility for the World Community

by KEITH SAMUELSON

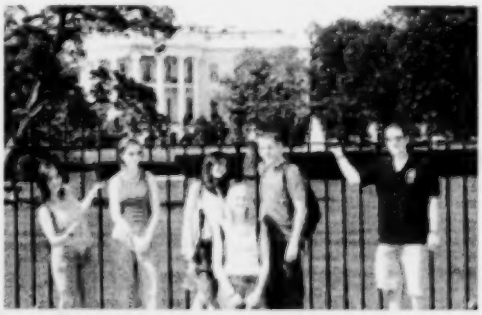
Last year Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's became the first school from our province to participate in a unique program that is destined to have a profound impact on Canadian culture.

The Asper Foundation's Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program (www.asperfoundation.com), a partnership with the Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com), educates young people on the history of Human Rights and the Holocaust. The purposes of the program are to disseminate knowledge, raise the moral and spiritual questions of these events and generate change for the benefit of society. Program objectives are to promote tolerance and sensitize Canadian high school students to the consequences of racism through a specially designed education program. This program was the recipient of the 2004 Human Rights Award from the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The program originated in Winnipeg in 1997 and became a national initiative in 2000. Over the past seven years more than 4,500 students from 49 cities in nine provinces have participated. It is the precursor to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights program, which will bring 100,000 Grade 9 students from across Canada to Winnipeg every year once the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is operational. This state-of-the-art facility will be the largest human rights educational institution in the world. For the first time, Canada's human rights tragedies and triumphs will be documented and presented so that all Canadians can learn, benefit and improve in the area of respecting human rights. While the Museum is under construction, students and chaperones from Newfoundland and Labrador will join hundreds of students and teachers from across Canada in Washington, D.C. for the travel component of the program.

The curriculum was developed specifically by Holocaust and human rights educators for The Asper Foundation, and there are three major components to the program:

1. Eighteen hours of classroom instruction over nine sessions, including classes on the Holocaust, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, discrimination against native people, immigrants and refugees, the civil rights movement, multiculturalism, The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, global leadership and individual responsibility. Students are required to write personal reflections in their journals after each session, to be copied, taken to Washington, and submitted after the program has been completed.
2. An educational tour of Washington, D.C, where students spend several days at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian Museum, the Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt monuments, the World War II, Iwo Jima and Vietnam memorials and other important monuments to freedom and democracy. They also attend presentations at the Canadian Embassy, a performance at Kennedy Centre and an escorted tour of Washington landmarks at night.
3. Students are required to volunteer 16 hours of community service on public projects of their choice which are approved by the project team and completed prior to the following academic year.



Students from Prince of Wales Collegiate pose in front of the White House in Washington D.C.

Upon completion of these three components, students, parents and chaperones celebrate with a "Graduation Evening", an official ceremony in which students are presented with their individual Memorandum for Personal Responsibility. This document articulates the vision of one of Canada's most esteemed philanthropists, the late Dr. Israel Asper, and is signed by a member of the Asper family. Students who sign vow never to be indifferent to the suffering of others and to pass on "the message of the Holocaust, the need for tolerance and the preservation of human rights for all peoples".

When the Foundation provided our school with an opportunity to initiate the program in our province, the response was overwhelming. Thirty-five students were accepted immediately and seven chaperones joined them for the Washington visit. Six of the chaperones were teachers. The other was Terry Rielly, who had recently written a play entitled "Some Picnic", based on a true story about his partner's father, a Holocaust survivor whose family escaped from Belgium the day before the Nazis invaded. When Terry wrote his first draft, he contacted me and asked if he could read the script to some of my students and get their response. I thought this was a rare opportunity for them to become part of the creative process prior to the publication stage. Plans progressed to the point where our Drama instructor, Tolson Barrington, and I arranged for Terry to read poems he had written about peace, perform songs he had written about the Holocaust, and for Theatre Arts students to read different parts of the "Some Picnic" script in a series of feedback sessions with combined English, Drama and Social Studies classes. CBC Radio's *Saturday Arts Report* produced a segment on the event, which turned out to be a valuable learning experience for the playwright, the teachers and the students who attended different readings throughout the day.

We had no idea of the media attention we'd be receiving a few months later. Terry, Tolson, Asper Foundation officials and, most importantly, the students, were all enthusiastic when I approached them about performing the play in Washington. The media were equally intrigued with the idea. There were features in *The Herald*, *The Telegram* and *The Independent*. Radio Noon's segment was broadcast on Canada Radio International; *Here and Now*'s piece was picked up by *CBC Newsworld* and *Strictly Canadian*. On the morning we left for Washington, the weekend edition of *The Globe and Mail* published a large photograph of Terry and the actors along with a rave review for a play that nobody had ever seen.

Terry and Tolson rehearsed Asper Program students for several months while I conducted the nine classroom sessions. We found that an in-depth study of context, utilizing a transdisciplinary, interactive approach, enhanced the students' understanding and developed the level of empathy necessary for an authentic performance. The cast delivered a dramatic reading of the script during our province's Holocaust Memorial Service, but the play had never been staged. The first and only performance took place in Washington, D.C. for an audience of hundreds of high school students and teachers from across Canada, many of whom had read *The Globe and Mail* article during their flight to Washington. Unknown to the cast, that audience included one very special guest.

Student actors Kerri-Steele-Nash, Shelley Feltham, Mark Day, and Josh Ellis with Terry Rielly, Keith Samuelson and Tolson Barrington.

In spite of the media hype and jetlag, the performance exceeded all expectations. The audience gave a rousing standing ovation at the end, moved by the intense emotion of Terry's words and music, along with the passion and skill of talented young actors under Tolson's expert direction. When thanking them, Gail Asper commented that *Some Picnic* was the type of play that could be presented at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights when it opened. She then proceeded to introduce several special guests, culminating with Mr. Alex Gilbert, the survivor whose story we had just witnessed. Terry, Tolson and I had known all along that Mr. Gilbert and his family were travelling from Montreal to be part of the audience. The mixture of shock and ecstasy on the faces of our students, particularly the actor playing the young Alex, left no doubt that we were right to keep it a secret. When Mr. Gilbert stood at centre stage and hugged "the young man who played me...my mother...my father", there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

There is no way to quantify the value of such an experience. The Holocaust represents such an immense and incomprehensible abortion of human dignity that we can only begin to understand its

significance through individual stories which are unique but taken together teach lessons which form the foundation for our collective survival.

Cast members from "Some Picnic": Mark Day, Shelley Feltham and Josh Ellis.

Considering the course outcomes, it seemed appropriate that the first graduation ceremony ever held in our province take place on September 21, the International Day for Peace. Many parents, friends and special guests took the time to celebrate the accomplishments of an extraordinary group of young people. They met every Sunday afternoon for eight weeks, sometimes enduring three-hour sessions analyzing unprecedented horrors inflicted upon total strangers on another continent almost 50 years before most of them were even born. There were no tests or assignments. They didn't receive any credits to fulfill graduation requirements. They simply had a sincere desire to learn, to try to understand and to empathize. They listened respectfully when Thaddeus Dreher described his activities with the Polish Resistance, when Ernest Mauskopf captivated them with stories of escaping the clutches of Eichman, and when Philip Riteman shocked them with his first-hand account of the horrors of Auschwitz. They demonstrated their determination to take action against injustice and hatred and made a vow to respect the basic dignity of every human being. They poured their hearts and souls into a beautiful work of art that had never been performed, and left a vast array of people spellbound, including the play's creator, director, the audience at our provincial Holocaust Memorial Service, students and teachers from across Canada, Asper Foundation officials, journalists, Holocaust survivors, even the gentleman whose story was portrayed on stage and his immediate family. They took turns in the spotlight, supported each other and always did what had to be done to make our participation in and contribution to the program an overwhelming success. They participated in humanitarian and multicultural projects in partnership with a wide range of community and international organizations. They generated awareness and raised funds for child soldiers in African war zones, child laborers in third world sweatshops and victims of the Tsunami disaster in Asia. They made a commitment and honored it, just as they honored their parents, their school and their province with their exemplary behavior throughout.

Ernest Mauskopf captivates students with stories of escaping the clutches of Eichman.

In a passionate speech at the Canadian Embassy, Philip Weiss, a Holocaust survivor from Winnipeg, described how he was "educated" in five concentration camps. Mr. Weiss cautioned us about the dangers of being immersed in a system which is obsessed with "academic excellence" to the detriment of humanitarian values, "educating the head but not the heart." History has taught us where that leads. We can be more optimistic about the future if we provide our children with the education they deserve.

Philip Riteman provides students with his first-hand account of the horrors of Auschwitz.

Teachers who are interested in offering the Asper Foundation's Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program at their schools this year or arranging for their students to participate in the program at Prince of Wales Collegiate may contact Aviva Rubin, Atlantic Representative for The Asper Foundation (jonkandvivi@hfx.eastlink.ca) or Keith Samuelson at Prince of Wales Collegiate (keithsamuelson@esdnl.ca).

Further information is available at: www.asperfoundation.com; www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com; www.ushmm.org; www.pwc.k12.nf.ca/asper (under construction).

Keith Samuelson is a teacher at Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's.

SAC Recognizes School Administrators

Mr. Paul Rose, Principal of Humber Elementary in Corner Brook, has been named the 2004-05 SAC Provincial Distinguished School Administrator of the Year Award winner. Paul received his award on May 27 at the School Administrators Council Conference in Stephenville.

Mr. Wayne Pye, Principal of Jakeman All-Grade School in Trout River, has been named the 2004-05 winner of the Victor May Award by the western regional branch of the School Administrators Council. The honour, initiated last year, is named after the late Victor May, the former principal of Elwood Primary School in Deer Lake, who died in December 2002.

Both awards are presented to a school administrator who exemplifies the same characteristics that made Victor May such a beloved educator, including having a strong academic focus, being innovative, promoting partnership and teacher growth, showing strong leadership, fostering character development and a social conscience and promoting personal and professional growth.

During his 14-year career, **Paul Rose** has been in administration with three school districts, as vice-principal, interant teacher and now as principal of Humber Elementary. Currently in his fifth year at Humber Elementary, Paul has made an indelible mark on the culture of the school. His personal stamina, focus on developing relationships, efficient and effective manner and emphasis on professional commitment is legendary among his colleagues and students.

Paul actively and positively promotes a consistent, persistent focus on academics while acknowledging the challenges faced by students and teachers as they work toward their goals. He is particularly innovative in finding ways for teachers to collaborate within the school day and regularly networks with outside agencies to seek and support opportunities that will allow staff and students to explore new and/or improved ways of achieving outcomes.

Paul believes that leadership opportunities and teacher growth are inextricably interrelated. He has worked hard, through personal example and through actively encouraging and arranging for professional growth to end professional isolation. He is intent on building leadership capacity within the school and says, "I know I have great people around me that make me look good. I just give them the room to spread their wings."

Paul's colleagues say he is the epitome of professionalism and stalwartly promotes adherence to the code of ethics. He is a very informed and involved administrator who never lets his hierarchical position prevent or interfere with his collaborative learning.

Paul was also awarded the 2003-04 Victor May Award at a District Leadership Meeting in the spring of 2004. His name has now been put forward as a nominee for the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) Distinguished Principal/Vice-Principal of the Year Award.

Wayne Pye became principal of Jakeman All-Grade in 1991 and immediately initiated a school improvement plan which got students, staff and parents actively involved. His commitment to improving student academic performance still continues and Jakeman's students have gone from having one of the lowest academic achievement levels in the province to one of the highest. Ironically, it was Victor May who helped Wayne turn the school around more than a decade ago.

Wayne said he was honoured to receive this award but is quick to point out that he did not succeed at his accomplishments alone. "You have to be honoured any time you are recognized by your peers or colleagues for anything," he said. "Upon accepting the award, I did make note that I accepted it on behalf of my staff because, without their dedication and help to put our school where it went, it wouldn't have happened."

(Information re Wayne Pye's award was taken from an article by Gary Kean in the October 19 issue of The Western Star.)

Paul Rose

Wayne Pye

Message From The Future

by BERNI STAPLETON

"I've been trying to get a message to you. You got messages from me in the past. You got messages about me. The late night phone calls that frightened you to death. The mad rush to get to emergency. The knock on the door and the cops are standing there with bad news. Bad news travels in a big hurry."

First, came the Letter. It is a typewritten document that mysteriously appears at meetings, seminars and other gatherings, labeled with the bold instructions: **To Be Read Aloud**. The Letter is always addressed to the specific gathering, but there is no signature or return address. It disappears after it is read. Those who hear it are profoundly affected.

"Try living with the word "trouble" stamped on the top of your file. "Troubled" becomes something to strive for. Something to live up to. From the time I was born the world looked at me with suspicious eyes. Kids pick up on everything, you know. We've got built in radar. No matter what I did I was not judged in the same way as others. Born with two strikes against me. Two steps behind before I learned to walk one step forward. Do you know who you are? You were my next-door neighbour."

Now, the Message has arrived. It comes in the form of six young people with the disturbing but familiar names of Trouble, Hard Case, Lost Cause, Whacked, Stunned and Good For Nothing.

"You gave me a ride to school when it rained once. You gave me a ticket to the hockey game. I could never invite my friends over to hang out at my house after school. I never knew what I'd find waiting for me when I'd walk through the door. But you made me feel welcome. You gave me your phone number. Do you remember me now?"

"Message From The Future" is a dramatic script for teenagers and the Message is plain: something you do, something you say, today, is going to make a difference in a young person's life one way or another. It might be good, or it might not be, but you will alter a life today and you may never get to know how, or why. This play causes one to wonder: if the future could speak to us, what would it have to say? The script and its' Message is best suited for ages 13 and on, including adults. It is a show written for six performers, and is just as effective with novice thespians as it is for those with more ease and experience. In fact, I think it's most appealing when used by people who are just learning what a powerful tool theatre is in effecting social awareness and change. All the roles are non-gender specific and each character represents a different background and cultural experience.

"You said every child was a gift for us all. Way down deep I felt so happy that someone thought I was a gift. I wanted to roll myself up in ribbons and lie down on your doorstep. You gave me unconditional love. Is it ringing any bells?"

I first developed the monologue "Letter From The Future" for the National Crime Prevention Centre, under the auspices of Jane Rutherford. I was asked to use a theatrical medium (a script) but to fashion it in such a way that it could be used comfortably by regular folks who may not have any theatre or public speaking experience. And, it needed to reflect the fact that achieving a safer, more aware community could happen one person, one moment at a time. We received overwhelming feedback on "Letter From The Future" and many teachers and other professionals who work with youth suggested that the monologue be adapted into a play for teens. I also believed that the premise and content would make a good drama for young people. Subsequently, through a generous grant from the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy (with program officer Cal Cole) and with the invaluable sponsorship of the NLTA (under the direction of René Wicks), I devised "Message From The Future". The Message is the Medium in this case and part of what makes it so

special, and part of how it is meant to work is that it is available free of charge to schools, drama groups, youth organizations, educational facilities and communities. The sky's the limit, provided it's used for non-profit purposes. It's fun, it can work for beginners as a staged reading, or, for those more experienced with Drama, it can be a full-fledged production. It can be used as a classroom reading to spark a discussion, or, as a surprise presentation at a corporate event. And, it comes with its' own set of instructions, posters, programs and guidelines and help. We (along with our community partner RCAT) held a staged public reading at the LSPU Hall in St. John's on October 23. I spent a few hours over the period of one week working with six amazingly enthusiastic teens and the result was a thorough test drive of the material and the staged reading format. The adaptation of the monologue into script form took over a year of research and writing and the text was workshopped thoroughly with dramaturges Amy House and Ruth Lawrence from RCAT, and Matthew Hare from the Grand Bank Regional Theatre Company.

"You are the neighbour from so long ago. Remember? You gave me your phone number. I stopped using it but one day, a few years from now, I will use it again. This is a message. Am I getting through?"

You can help. Spread the word. Use the Message. Give us your feedback. No setting is too modest. No audience is too small. No performer is too inexperienced. This is one of the few things in life that thrives on the fact that experience is not needed. And, for those who do inhabit the stage and its' environs, you can offer your guidance and support to others who want to embark on the lovely journey of the spoken word and emotional revelation.

You can check out "Message From The Future" for yourself at www.nlta.ca or www.virtualteachercentre.ca. We have a registration process that allows us to track the path of the script, but don't be intimidated by that. You can download the text to have a read of it, to take it to class, to satisfy your curiosity, and, of course, to use and use and use again. The Message is plain: something you do today can make a change for the better. Maybe that good thing is "Message From The Future". By the way, the Message has no expiry date. Thanks to the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy and the NLTA, we hope this initiative will spread across the country and enjoy a very long life.

Berni Stapleton is Newfoundland and Labrador playwright/actor/comedienne.

Christmas Spirit

by MARIE WALL

I was at church one Christmas Eve a few years back, a night similar to many I have experienced. The shopping was finished, the house was decorated, and the preparation and waiting were over. After all the hustle and bustle it was an uncanny quiet that felt somewhat unnatural. It was a moment in the service that was silent, you could hear a pin drop. Out of the back of the church a young voice cried out loudly, "Santa, Santa, help me!" This girl is my nephew's child and knowing she was in distress, the young father, red faced, took her outside and played with her.

Like this little girl, many of us have wanted to cry out for help, especially at Christmas time. Sometimes there is someone to help us, other times we have to help ourselves. Christmas is a season like no other throughout the year, for both bad and good reasons. Literally, it is a season of dark and light. It occurs at the darkest time of the year and colored lights are used in our homes and communities brightening the world around us. I have heard many Christmas memories and the diverse experiences speak to the challenging demands and stressors, as well as its potential for fun and celebration.

"Christmas spirit" is a common phrase that may conjure up images of expectations of things as they are "supposed" to be. For many, these externally imposed expectations lead to disappointment and frustration; imposed by traditions that may no longer be meaningful, or by pressure to extend beyond our means, both financially and energetically – to be all things for all people. It is easy to become swept away in the commercialism. It is important to remember that Christmas is about more than the gift giving and "busyness". It is an opportunity to be nourished and rejuvenated, to connect with our family and friends, and an opportunity to get away from our regular routine for a short while. There is a great deal of thought about how big business has taken control of the Christmas season and made it their own for profit. I have been wondering about the meaning of Christmas and have questioned whether it is fulfilling the potential it can. Christmas is like many experiences in life – the preparation, the anticipation and then the celebration and reflection. Without one of these the holiday will go on but its full potential may not be realized.

Both Christmas and life in general requires work; there is effort that goes into it and rewards that can come from it. The preparation is demanding of our time, financial resources and energy. We are challenged to balance each and, where possible, to share the work and effort with family members. Unfortunately, preparing for Christmas may come more naturally to some than others resulting in a few taking on the lion's share, which often leads to Christmas burnout and resentment. When someone feels drained and distressed the festive season will likely be filled with tension – not a good place to be. If this feels too close to home for you it is time to make a change. It is time to share the responsibilities. Get together with others who need to help you prepare; share what it's like for you, how it makes you feel to be doing so much, let them know what effects it has on you and what you need in order to be less stressed. Talk about it, plan things out and share the load. It may not feel natural because it would be unfamiliar but distributing the work can feel good and it could start a whole new approach to the preparation.

The anticipation can be seen most easily in the eyes of children, just as the young girl at the back of the church was eager and restless. Her hopes and wishes building in wait of what Santa might deliver. The anticipation is palatable. So what are we waiting for? Is it Santa or is it some other gift? There are several words and concepts that stand out for me when I think of Christmas: joy, love, peace, gifts, lights, family, and reminiscing. Take time to consider what you need in your life at this time and throughout the year. The gifts you are seeking may be material or they may be emotional, such as safety, confidence, peace or anything that you are wanting.

For most in our culture, Christmas is a time of celebration. The festivities are the culmination in observing the traditions that have been created over the years. For some it can be a quiet celebration, or for others it is about gathering with family and friends, which involves visiting and welcoming people into

their homes. I know a lot of people who say it is the only time they get to reconnect with people they don't see throughout the year.

Another important part of Christmas is reflection, remembering the wonderment of it all. To open our hearts and feel gratitude for gifts in our lives; for the quietness or the parties. This is a time that could coincide with the clearing away of the signs of the season or Old Christmas Day. Socrates said "the unreflected life is not worth living" because it does not give us the opportunity to anchor into our lives the experiences that sustain us. It is not Christmas that we will need to remember through the year but the gifts of joy, love, peace, family and friends.

It is also important to remember that everyone in our schools and communities does not celebrate Christmas. We live a in a multi-cultural province and for those who do not observe this season it can be different. For those who have had bad experiences at this time of year or have had a loss, it may be a very painful time. There are others who cannot afford the expenses at this time of year; the pressure on them may even be greater. Try to assess what you can do and what is reasonable.

Take the time you need and do what you can to help you feel refreshed for the new year. Just as a young girl cried out for help from the back of the church, we can call out too. Ask for what you need this Christmas from those around you and my best wishes for an enjoyable, healthy and happy season.

Marie Wall is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Marie Wall (ext. 265) or Claudette Coombs (ext. 242).

Introducing Our 2005-06 Provincial Negotiating Team

Sean Noah (Chairperson)

Sean Noah has been teaching for 24 years at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels. He is currently principal of Cape St. Francis Elementary in Pouch Cove. Prior to joining the staff at Cape St. Francis, he taught at St. Patrick's Elementary in Bay Bulls, Avoca Collegiate in Badger, and St. Michael's in Goose Bay. Sean has a B.A., B.Ed., and M.Ed. (Teaching) from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Sean has been involved with the NLTA for many years. He has been a member of the NLTA Provincial Executive since 1999 and was elected as Vice-President for 2005-07 at the 2005 Biennial General Meeting. Sean has chaired the Membership Benefits and Services Committee, Group Insurance Trustees, and has been a member of numerous provincial and ad hoc committees

At the branch level Sean has been President, Vice-President, and Communications Officer with the Labrador North Branch, and President and Vice-President of the Exploits Valley Branch.

Sean believes that teaching is a great profession but teachers must be given the appropriate support, time and resources to do the job that they want and need to do. He says Government needs to truly invest in education, in its teachers, students and schools. "Teachers must be given relief in the area of workload during this round of collective bargaining. The demands and expectations on teachers are far too great."

Negotiating Team Chairperson Sean Noah (left) in discussions with NLTA Administrative Staff Officer Perry Downey.

Jolene Anderson

Jolene Anderson has been teaching for four years and is currently a Level I-II French Immersion, Core French and English teacher at Mealy Mountain Collegiate in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. She has also taught at Goose High School. Jolene has a B.A. in French and Linguistics and a B.Ed. (Intermediate/Secondary) from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Jolene has been involved at the branch level of the NLTA as a member-at-large of the Lake Melville Branch. She agreed to join the Negotiating Team because she feels a better learning and teaching environment is essential to the well being of students and staff. "The statistics are telling us that one third of all new teachers leave their chosen profession in the first five years. The increased workload and work demands are becoming almost unbearable. It is clear that something has to change in order for teachers to teach and for students to succeed."

Jolene believes every student needs to be given equal opportunity to succeed.

Dana Burridge

Dana Burridge has 28 years of teaching experience. He is currently teaching Grade 7-12 French, Social Studies, and English Canadian Law at Pasadena Academy. He has also taught in Jackson's Arm (White Bay) and Deer Lake.

Dana has been a member of the NLTA Provincial Executive since 1999 and is currently a Table Officer. He has chaired the Professional Issues in Teaching Committee and the Equity Issues in Education Committee. He has also been a member of the following committees: Collective Bargaining Legislation Review, Finance and Property, Group Insurance, Educational Leave, Deferred Salary Leave, and Pooled Investment Fund.

Dana was the founding member and Communications Officer of Taylor's Brook Branch. He has also held all Executive positions on the Deer Lake Branch, including three years as President.

Dana joined the Negotiating Team because he is trying to make a difference... one step at a time. He feels his community involvement, NLTA experience and interest would make some difference.

Dana's teaching philosophy is simply this: "Take time for yourself!"

Leo Freeborn

Leo Freeborn has been a Senior High English teacher at St. Boniface All Grade in Ramea during his entire 31-year teaching career. He has a B.A. and B.A.(Ed.) from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Leo has been active at the branch level of the NLTA for many years. He has been Branch President of the Rameaux Branch for the past 20 years, and has held all other Branch offices. He has been a member of the Provincial NLTA/PTF Committee and has chaired the Provincial NLTA Discipline Committee. He received the NLTA President's Award at the 2001 Biennial General Meeting.

Leo believes in putting students first! He joined the Negotiating Team in the hope of making the classroom a better place for students to learn and teachers to teach.

Linda Morey

Linda Morey has been teaching for 22 years and is currently a Grade 3 Special Education teacher at Mary Queen of Peace in St. John's. She has also taught in Sheshatshiu, Labrador and at St. Paul's Junior High (St. John's), Roncalli Elementary, (St. John's) Holy Trinity High (Torbay) and St. Matthew's Elementary (St. John's). Linda has a B.A. (Primary Education), B.Spec.Ed, and M.Ed. (Administration) from Memorial University.

Linda has been involved at the Special Interest Council level of the NLTA for several years. She is a member of the School Administrators Special Interest Council (SAC Region 10), was co-chair of the 2004 SAC Conference, President of Provincial SAC, Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Principals, and was a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Administrators within the NLTA.

Linda says she joined the Negotiating Team because she believes teachers are key to the learning process. "Improving the working conditions for teachers will have a positive impact on student learning."

Barbara Palmer

Barbara Palmer has 25 years of teaching experience. She has taught various subjects in grades K-12 and has been a Guidance Counselor and Educational Psychologist in schools on the Northern Peninsula, Middle Arm, Baie Verte Peninsula, and Green Bay, Central. She is currently a Program Specialist with the Grand Falls-Windsor Regional Office of the Nova Central District. Barbara has a B.A.(Ed.), B.A. (Memorial University of Newfoundland), M.Ed. (University of Ottawa) and a Psy.D. (Southern California University for Professional Studies).

Barbara has been a member of COSS, NLSCPA and the NLTA Gender Equity Committee and says she joined the Negotiating Team because education is essential for the growth of society. "We need the best possible working conditions in order to recruit and retain the highest trained, most skilled teachers."

Ethel Park

Ethel Park has been teaching for 12 years. She has taught grades K-6 and Special Needs at L.R. Ash (Lethbridge), Bishop White School (Port Rexton), Catalina Elementary, Anthony Paddon Elementary (Musgravetown), and Balbo Elementary (Shoal Harbour). She is currently teaching Grade 1 at Matthew Elementary in Bonavista. Ethel holds a B.Ed. (Primary) degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Ethel has been involved with the NLTA as a School Representative for Matthew Elementary and at the branch level as Vice-President of Landfall Branch. She joined the Negotiating Team because she believes education is essential to all. "Over the past few years, workload is increasing and therefore, it is affecting teachers both personally and professionally. In turn, it is affecting the students of our province. I hope, in a small way, to make a difference in the lives of teachers. Thus, this will make a difference to our students – they are our future!!"

Lloyd Hobbs (centre) with Negotiating Team members Linda Morey and Leo Freeborn.

2005-06 NLTA Provincial Negotiating Team (l-r): Jolene Anderson, Leo Freeborn, Perry Downey (Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services), Lloyd Hobbs (Assistant Executive Director, NLTA Chief Negotiator), Sean Noah (Chairperson), Linda Morey, Ethel Park, Dana Burridge, and Barbara Palmer.

Investing: The Lingo and the Stats

by PAT HOGAN

In the past, I used to "save" money in a bank savings account or in a term deposit or GIC at the credit union. "Investing" was for the wealthy (so I thought) and not for a middle-income teacher trying to raise a family. With the emergence of RRSPs and the rise in the mutual fund phenomenon, suddenly everyone became an "investor".

Now I know that we can "save" or "build wealth" in two basic ways: 1) by purchasing debt securities that guarantee repayment of the principal with interest in a certain time, e.g. buying a CSB (Canada Savings Bond). This is a contract whereby I loan the Government my money in exchange for a pledge of returning my principal intact and a pledge of interest income paid at a set rate for a specific time period. These are called bonds or "fixed-income securities".

The other way to build wealth is by purchasing an ownership interest in a company…by purchasing common shares or equity in the company. Unlike the "bond solution" above, here there is no guarantee of return of principal and no pledge to pay interest income at some future time. However, the potential profits – if the company does well – are called "capital gains" and "dividends" and the rewards are, in theory, unlimited.

In short, the basic building blocks of investing are equities – common or preferred shares (stocks) – with higher risk, no guarantees, but greater reward potential and fixed-income investments (like bonds) that are low risk, safe through guarantees but with low reward. Both have their place; indeed investors normally include both types of investment vehicles in some proportion called "asset allocation" in a single "portfolio" (collection of investments).

Example: Karen, a Kindergarten teacher and new mother, has started an RESP for her baby. With her advisor, she has selected a couple of superior Canadian equity mutual funds for her investment. Her asset allocation is 100% equities and 0% fixed income. This is appropriate given her long-term goal of growth (her baby's post secondary education is 18 years in the future). As her child grows up, her advisor will recommend that her RESP asset allocation change to allow increasingly more fixed-income securities. By age 16, her RESP account will be more like 80% bonds and 20% equities – to decrease the risk of loss and to preserve capital given her child's short time frame as she finishes high school.

Note: The monitoring of your account by a professional advisor with periodic meetings is invaluable! Advisor services are often at no cost to you since their compensation is paid directly by the fund company – not out of your pocket!

The key to successful investing (and most important component) is appropriate asset allocation. What is appropriate? It depends on each individual. What are your personal financial goals? What is your age? What is your expected "rate of return"? What is your "time frame" when you expect to use the money? What is your "comfort level" or "risk tolerance" with investing? What has been your previous personal or vicarious experience in investing? How does this investment fit into your overall financial situation? E.g. your debt situation, your life and disability insurance coverage in place, i.e., the larger picture. These are the questions that determine your personal "investor profile".

Example: Brian and Lorraine are saving for a trip to Europe in five years. With their advisor they open a non-registered investment account solely in Lorraine's name (as the lower-income spouse – to reduce taxes). Given their short time frame of five years, they select an asset allocation of 70% equities and 30% fixed income securities for the first year. Inside the equities component, their advisor recommends a selection of superior Canadian equity, dividend income, small cap and real estate mutual funds. All of these funds will produce tax-advantaged capital gains and dividends… important in non-registered accounts (since these are taxed each year).

Their fixed income side will contain their advisor's recommendations with some short term bond or

mortgage funds and a real return bond fund... given the rising interest rate environment we find ourselves in today. As the years pass, and they approach the year of travel, they will adjust their asset allocation to say 80% bonds and 20% equities...again to reduce risk, preserve capital, and give them peace of mind that their hard-earned savings will not evaporate with a late downturn in the economy. As a final strategy, they will arrange automatic bi-weekly payroll deposits to this account – to coincide with their payday schedule – and so take advantage of "dollar cost averaging" to grow their account painlessly.

In truth, there is no "one-size-fits-all" when it comes to investing. Your "investor profile" is individual and personal. As well, your profile changes constantly... if only with the passage of time.

Two other concepts are important in investing: balance and diversification. "Balance" refers to the proportion of cash/equities/fixed income in a portfolio. Correct balance will differ for each investor.

Another key concept is "diversification". This means not putting all your eggs in one basket. Stock markets in Canada, US, Europe, emerging markets... all march to their own tune. Bond markets, too, set their own direction and pace geared to interest rate movements. Professional advisors have the expertise to assemble a balanced and diverse mix of superior investments to fit your investor profile.

Okay, so where do you invest today? Here are some general stats and observations. Below is a table of mutual fund benchmarks to September 30, 2005. All rates of return are in $CAD and express annual compound returns. (See "Benchmarks" in *Monthly Fund Review* at www.globefund.com.)

	1 year	3 years	5 years	10 years
CPI: inflation rate	2.5%	2.1%	2.3%	2.0%
CSB: Canada Savings Bonds	1.4%	1.7%	2.2%	3.0%
5 year GIC average	2.8%	3.1%	3.5%	4.3%
SC Universe Bond Total Return Index	9.0%	7.3%	7.9%	8.2%
S&P 500 (US Index)	1.3%	3.3%	-8.0% (negative)	6.2%
MSCI EAFE Index (Europe, etc.)	16%	12.8%	-1.7% (negative)	4.6%
S&P/TSX Total Return Index (Canada)	29.3%	23.5%	3.0%	11.2%

Observations (with the caveat that these historical rates may or may not be replicated in the future... on the fixed income side).

- The Bank of Canada has done a consistent job of keeping inflation within the acceptable range.
- Canada Savings Bonds (CSBs) are not the recommended choice for the fixed income investor; they generally don't even match the inflation rate...and that's before taxes!
- The GIC route rates a bit better than CSBs, but if inflation and taxes are considered (in a non-registered account), your real rate of return would be .0065% annually using the best 10-year figures. Not the best investment either!
- The bond choice looks better. At least you can beat taxes and inflation with a selection of bond mutual funds...especially important in non-registered funds which are annually taxed on their interest income.

On the equities side:

- Note the smaller 5-year returns, reflecting the "bear" years of 2001 and 2002 when equities (but not bonds) lost money on most markets;
- Clearly the Canadian market has been the place to be in the last 10 years.
- Geographic diversification into EAFE (Europe, Australia, Far East) also has produced rewards in the last three years.
- US equities in general have not done as well as Canadian equities in the recent past.
- In 2005, Emerging Markets and Japanese funds and all the following Canadian classes of funds are doing well: Natural Resources, Equity Funds, Dividend Income, Small Cap, Income Trusts (see any Saturday *Globe and Mail* Business section).

Pat Hogan is a retired teacher/principal and a practicing Certified Financial Planner. He would welcome reaction or inquiries, with no obligation, at 709-754-0413 or email: hogan@nl.rogers.com.

Calendar

2006 SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION "CROSSCURRENTS CONFERENCE"

March 9-10, 2006

Westin Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver, BC. This is a conference addressing special education issues for regular classroom teachers, para-professionals, special educators and parents. Early bird fees – Teachers: $155 (one day), $215 (two days); T.A.s, parents: $145 (one day), $185 (two days). For registration information visit www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA or contact Priscilla Fortier, Tel: 205-964-3219, priscillafort@hotmail.com.

MUSIC SIC PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

April 6-8, 2006

Battery Hotel, St. John's. Contact: Heather McDonald, Tel: 709-786-4268/3400; heathermcdonald@esdnl.ca.

NLTA Christmas Hours

Please be advised that the NLTA Building will be closed from December 24th to January 2nd (inclusive) to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.

Dates to Remember

January 2006

Jan 13	**Deadline:** 2006 Christmas Card Contest entries
Jan 15	**Deadline:** Receipt of Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop, and Special Recognition Award Nominations at the NLTA office
Jan 19	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Jan 27-28	NLTA Executive Meeting

February 2006

Feb 1	**Deadline:** Applications for Educational Leave – teachers must make prior application to school board
Feb 14	Janeway Day in the Schools

March 2006

Mar 5-11	Education Week
Mar 16	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Mar 30	NLTA Executive Meeting
March 31	Joint Council Meeting
Mar 31	**Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year
Mar 31	**Deadline:** Centennial Study Award Applications
Mar 31	**Deadline** (on or before March 31): International Conference Presenters Program Applications

April 2006

Apr 1	Joint Council Meeting
Apr 1	**Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications
Apr 15	**Deadline**: Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract

FEBRUARY 14, 2006

Janeway Day

An opportunity to teach children about the true value of helping others.

Every year, Janeway Day in the schools provides an opportunity for children in this province to help other children. In fact, since 1986, students and teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador have donated more than $730,000 to the Janeway. That's something for us to be proud of!

Make sure you participate in Janeway Day 2006; here's how:

BEFORE FEBRUARY 14TH...

❤ Announce the project and explain what's involved.

❤ If possible spend some time discussing the Janeway Hospital with your class or have a student who has been a patient at the hospital tell classmates about the experience.

ON FEBRUARY 14TH...

❤ Ask students (and teachers) to forego the equivalent of recess monies for this one day. (That's their donation to the Janeway.)

Janeway Day in the Schools is the only fundraising effort sponsored by the NLTA.